



Community-based Restoration Matching Grants Program

The Nature Conservancy, Marine Initiative & NOAA Restoration Center

Request for Proposals – May 2004

TNC-NOAA Community-based Habitat Restoration Grants

The Marine Initiative and NOAA are pleased to request proposals for their restoration matching grants program. The grants program results from a new three-year national cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Marine Initiative, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Restoration Center.

The objective of NOAA's and TNC's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) is to bring together citizens, public and non-profit organizations, watershed groups, industry, corporations and businesses, youth conservation corps, students, landowners, and local government, state, and Federal agencies to implement habitat restoration projects to benefit NOAA trust resources (anadromous, estuarine, and marine species and their habitats). This innovative program recognizes the significant role that partnerships can play in making habitat restoration happen within communities, and acknowledges that habitat restoration is often best implemented through technical and monetary support provided at a community level. (For more information <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/> or <http://nature.org/initiatives/marine/work/art9023.html>)

Projects at TNC priority sites throughout all USA states and territories are eligible to compete for these grants to restore or enhance estuarine, marine, and anadromous species and their habitats.

Focus areas: We will support projects in three key areas.

1. Shellfish (bivalve) restoration projects nationwide.
2. Project sites in regions where an ecoregional plan has been completed and restoration is a regional priority (i.e., at least Puget Sound and the northern Gulf of Mexico).
3. Any innovative restoration project nationwide that support NOAA trust resources.

Funding: We anticipate funding 8-12 projects with grants typically from \$25,000 to \$85,000. The project period can be up to 24 months.

Match Requirements: The NOAA-TNC national partnership provides seed money to individual projects that leverage funds and other contributions from the public and private sector to implement locally important habitat restoration that benefits living marine resources.

Due to successful private fundraising at the national level, the Marine Initiative (MI) will contribute up to 25% of requested funds to the sites selected for funding under this new partnership. This contribution will result in a total match obligation by project sites of 0.75:1, since sites will be required to match NOAA funds only. As an example, for a total project cost of \$105k an applicant could expect \$45k in NOAA funds, \$15k in MI funds and \$45k as your match obligation.

The project site match can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services. *Note however that neither Federal funds nor Federal funds passed through state agencies are eligible to be used as matching funds.*

Marine Initiative Technical Support: As part of TNC's increased focus on restoration, The Marine Initiative will work with site and regional programs to better leverage the impact of individual restoration projects through information exchange and better coordination across projects. We will work with site and regional practitioners to (i) improve shellfish restoration efforts nationwide by promoting learning and synergies through mechanisms such as a national Shellfish Network, (ii) link projects towards achieving regional restoration success, (iii) catalyze projects aimed at the restoration of nursery habitats, and (iv) improve the measuring and monitoring of restoration success.

NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program (CRP) Technical Support

Through NOAA's Restoration Center, CRP staff provides technical support to assist project proponents in the development and implementation of sound coastal restoration projects. Located strategically throughout the country, CRP field staff are available as needed to provide site-specific guidance on activities including project design and engineering, environmental compliance, and scientific-based project monitoring. In addition, CRP field staff work to enhance community engagement and collaboration among local entities to increase restoration success at the local and regional level and coordinate and gain public recognition for restoration efforts.

Administrative and Reporting Requirements

Awards are expected to be made in the latter half of 2004. Upon notification of an award, projects will be assigned a Marine Initiative budget center number to use for project expenses.

Upon award notification, projects will also be informed as to required financial and programmatic reporting requirements. This information will assist TNC in meeting Federal guidelines for reporting expenses and project status on a semi-annual basis.

Proposal Requirements and Submission

Specifications for TNC-NOAA Community-based Habitat Restoration Grants are detailed in the following pages. **Proposals are due by June 11** by e-mail (preferred), or by hard copy to:

Kendra Karr
kkarr@tnc.org (preferred)

Marine Initiative, The Nature Conservancy
100 Shaffer Road, LML
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For questions about the grants program or proposals please contact Rob Wilder, Restoration Coordinator at 760-579-1364 (phone), rwilder@tnc.org (email).

COMMUNITY-BASED HABITAT RESTORATION GRANTS 2004

Proposal Requirements

NOAA-TNC Partnership

TNC's mission is to protect representative biodiversity and the lands and waters that they need to survive. Our greatest strength lies in our effectiveness at conserving biodiversity at the local level. Our "conservation process" consists of four fundamental components: setting *priorities* through ecoregional planning; developing *strategies* to abate threats at both single and multiple conservation areas; taking direct conservation *action*; and measuring conservation *success* (*Conservation by Design* 2000).

In the past, TNC focused primarily on terrestrial conservation. However, with the Marine Initiative, we have begun focusing more of our efforts on marine and aquatic conservation. These efforts are growing rapidly and are essential because our mission requires that we address conservation of biodiversity in all environments. Additionally, *Conservation by Design* requires us to explicitly consider and sustain the ecological linkages among terrestrial, freshwater, and marine systems.

TNC's conservation process has brought heightened awareness of coastal and marine ecosystems and the many species that require these habitats during part of their lives. This process has also highlighted the fact that many coastal and marine sites require restoration (see Appendix III) to function properly. As a result, TNC's Marine Initiative has begun vigorously promoting aquatic conservation practices, including habitat restoration under the NOAA/TNC partnership.

Grants: Focus Areas & Amounts

This year, typical grants will be in the range of \$25,000-\$85,000. This will be a competitive process. The merits of each proposal will be weighed based on how closely the project aligns with the national partnership's evaluation criteria.

Given recent successes in the TNC/NOAA partnership, we are now able to more strategically guide our restoration funding and efforts. Over the next three years, we will focus restoration efforts: (1) where we have completed marine regional plans and where restoration has been identified as a regional priority (that includes at least Puget Sound and the northern Gulf of Mexico; (2) in shellfish ecosystems nationwide where we have significant on-the-ground experience and are developing innovative restoration strategies and a Shellfish Network; and (3) in continued support to the best and most innovative restoration projects in any system nationwide that support NOAA trust resources.

We are soliciting a wide array of proposed projects for community-based restoration of habitats. We always encourage applicants to note multiple benefits to many species, habitat, and ecosystems of any proposed project. This year in particular proposals that target west-coast salmonids should clearly state the potential non-salmonid benefits to other NOAA trust resources.

Elements of Successful Project Proposals

Projects in any of the above 3 categories with the following elements in place should consider submitting a proposal:

- Project is fully aligned with *Conservation by Design*. This means:
 - It is part of a priority conservation area as identified through TNC's ecoregional planning process. If an ecoregional plan has not yet been completed, the project must be identified as a high priority by the state or territorial chapter.
 - It is included as part of a site conservation plan, or conservation area, that identifies restoration as

- a primary strategy for achieving conservation success.
 - It should identify, or is prepared to address, short and long-term measures of success.
- Project implementation will result in tangible restoration of living marine resources. This diversity includes anadromous and marine species and their habitats.
- Project involves significant community engagement and support that is tied to the restoration activities. This should be done to ensure the community is aware of restoration activities, it feels ownership in specific projects, and can voice any concerns there may be.
- Project concept involves substantial interaction with the NOAA regional representative throughout its development; a list of the NOAA local contacts is provided in Appendix 1.
- Project is staffed by a local project director.
- Project involves partners.
- Project must have the ability to provide a minimum 1:1 non-federal match to NOAA funds.

Proposal Contents

If the project qualifies, a proposal should be submitted to Kendra Karr in TNC's Marine Initiative no later than June 11, 2004. ***Proposals should be no longer than five pages (not including attachments), and be prepared in conjunction with your assigned TNC Grants Specialist. You are also strongly encouraged to consult with your appropriate NOAA Community-based Restoration Program Regional Contact, early-on in the process.***

Minimum information to be provided in a project proposal includes:

BASIC INFORMATION

- Project Name
- Contact Person (address, phone, fax, email)
- Congressional District
- Regional NOAA Contact Staff Person

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 1-2 paragraph Project Abstract
- Location (include project zip code)
- Relevant Maps or Photos (may be included as appendices) with site location(s) indicated
- Land Ownership (public and private)
- Anticipated Benefits to Species and Habitat(s)
- Desired Future Conditions (in measurable terms where appropriate)
- Partners Involved (include partner contributions, if applicable)
- Whether NEPA, ESA, EFH or other regulatory compliance issues may be expected

WORK PLAN

- Start and End Date (1 year projects are preferred, projects up to 2 years are acceptable, particularly if the longer time is needed for monitoring)
- Restoration Methodology
- Timeline for Anticipated Actions
- Identification of the mechanism that will be used, by TNC or a partner, to ensure that necessary environmental permits and consultations will be secured prior to the use of Federal funds.
- Identification of Goals-- Description of Long-Term Measures of Success
- Identification of Measurable Objectives-- Project-specific Benchmarks for Measuring Short-Term Success.
- Community Engagement (may include: hands-on training and restoration activities undertaken by

volunteers; sponsorship from local entities, either through in-kind goods and services or cash contributions; public education and outreach; and/or support from state and local governments)

- Anticipated outreach, e.g., presentations, papers, publications, if applicable.

PROJECTED BUDGET AND NARRATIVE (see Appendix II)

- Completed *Projected Budget Template*
- Grant Amount Requested
- Match Amount (non-federal is required.)
- Source(s) of Match (confirmed and pending)
- Justification For Fund Use (as listed in projected budget) and a budget narrative

Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Technical merit and project feasibility;
- Extent to which project benefits living marine resources and persist over the long-term;
- Monitoring and long-term maintenance plan;
- Community involvement, education, and stewardship;
- Budget justification, detail, and cost-effectiveness;
- Whether NEPA, ESA, or other regulatory compliance issues may reasonably be raised, and how likely they are to be expeditiously resolved to allow project implementation to begin shortly after receipt of funding;
- Degree of support from and involvement with, the regional NOAA contact person.
- The extent of present and future involvement of TNC staff at these sites.

Preference will be given to projects containing:

- Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) as identified by NOAA Fisheries, and areas within EFH identified as Habitat Areas of Particular Concern;
- Areas identified as critical habitat for federally or state listed estuarine and marine species;
- Areas identified as important habitat for marine mammals and turtles;
- Areas identified as important nursery habitats
- Watersheds or other areas under special management by state coastal management programs;
- Other important commercial or recreational fish habitat;
- Focusing on bivalve shellfish ecosystems; and
- Projects in areas where marine regional plans have been completed and restoration has been identified as a regional priority.

Project Evaluation and Selection

Together, NOAA and TNC are selecting projects that will receive support from this innovative national partnership. This selection process will take place in two steps. In the first step, the Marine Initiative will perform a preliminary review and narrow the project proposals submitted to those that most closely meet the qualifications and evaluation criteria. In the second step, NOAA Headquarters, the NOAA regional staff, and TNC will then review, evaluate, and select final projects with the goal of funding 8-12 projects.

Reporting Requirements for Selected Sites

After the selection process, the Grantees that are awarded funding, shall be required to file progress reports according to NOAA Electronic Report Format Form:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/project_reports.html

Monitoring:

The Conservancy and NOAA will work together to determine monitoring parameters and success targets for successful applicants based on the NOAA Restoration Center Minimum Monitoring Requirements (see:

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/restoration/projects_programs/crp/partners_funding/project_reports.html) and TNC's Measures of Success.

Applicant's Permit Requirements

Applicants must provide where relevant a list and status (obtained, application filed, when anticipate obtaining approval, or have not applied) of all necessary federal, state, tribal and local permits required to complete the project and the appropriate regulatory agency contact (name, title, phone) for each permitting agency. TNC will require copies of permit and compliance documentation once the documentation is secured.

Grantees will be required to satisfy all financial and programmatic requirements and meet all local, state and tribal environmental laws and Federal consistency requirements before project implementation.

National Environmental Policy Act Requirements

All proposals will be reviewed for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance by NOAA Fisheries. All projects must comply with NEPA before TNC will release funds. For more information on NEPA, please visit NOAA's website at <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov>.

Applicants will be required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, the presence of historic structures, and impacts to coral reef systems) in order for NOAA to make a NEPA determination on each proposal.

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal.

Once awards are approved, we will also need to ensure that for projects with volunteers that there is a management plan for them (e.g., liability waivers).

Appendix I

NOAA Community-based Restoration Program Field Contacts

Alaska

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APPENDIX II

PROJECTED BUDGET TEMPLATE COMMUNITY-BASED HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT

FUNDS	REQUESTED GRANT FUNDS	TNC MATCH (state whether confirmed or pending)	Third-Party In-Kind Match (State if confirmed or pending)	PURPOSE (briefly state and elaborate in narrative)
Personnel				
Fringe Benefits (full-time @ 38.5% short-term @ 8.5%)				
Travel				
Equipment				
Supplies				
Contractual				
Other				
Total Direct Expenses				
TOTAL				

* Proposals are not to include indirect costs due to the nature of the matching grants program.

NARRATIVE. Provide detail on how the amounts listed above (in all columns) will be used to meet the goals of this project. Also address where confirmed or potential sources of match will come from.

APPENDIX III

DEFINITION OF RESTORATION & REPRESENTATIVE ACTIVITIES

TNC's definition of "restoration" closely mirrors that published by the National Research Council in their book on Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems:

"Restoration is defined as the return of an ecosystem to a close approximation of its condition prior to disturbance. In restoration, ecological damage to the resource is repaired. Both the structure and the functions of the ecosystem are recreated. Merely recreating the form without the functions, or the functions in an artificial configuration bearing little resemblance to a natural resource, does not constitute restoration. The goal is to emulate a natural, functioning, self-regulating system that is integrated with the ecological landscape in which it occurs. Often, natural resource restoration requires one or more of the following processes: reconstruction of antecedent physical hydrologic and morphologic conditions; chemical cleanup or adjustment of the environment; and biological manipulation, including revegetation and the reintroduction of absent or currently nonviable native species."

An illustrative, but not exhaustive, list of possible restoration activities to be funded under this national partnership might include:

- Restoring marsh, wetland, seagrass, or riparian communities through revegetation, invasive plant control, natural recontouring of the landscape, removing levees and artificial drainage systems, and related activities.
- Restoring natural shellfish beds in estuarine areas through seeding juvenile shellfish, creating adult spawner sanctuaries, and/or introducing appropriate substrate for shellfish growth
- Restoring native populations of aquatic organisms through re-introductions and control of invasive plant and animal species.
- Working with landowners or managers to restore water clarity, quality, and natural flow of fresh and saltwater.
- Working with water managers to restore natural volumes and timing of freshwater flows through rivers and into estuarine and coastal areas, and to remove or reduce the impacts of barriers to the movement of aquatic organisms in rivers and estuaries.
- Working with coastal and freshwater management authorities to effect ecologically compatible dredging, channelization, shoreline protection, and related activities.